

TRUST in GOD,
The best Remedy against FEARS
of all Kinds.

A
S E R M O N
Preached in the
Parish-Church of **LAMBETH.**

By the Right Reverend Father in G O D,
EDMUND GIBSON, D. D.
Late Lord Bishop of L O N D O N.

Now re-printed, under the Direction of
The **L O R D B I S H O P** of **F E R N S.**

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Designed by way of *Spiritual* Comfort and Support, to such unhappy Persons as are subject to **MELANCHOLY FEARS**, and to others, who are at any Time under *Anxiety* and *Dejection* of Mind, upon *just* and *reasonable* **FEARS** of some *approaching* **EVIL.**

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He will not be afraid of any evil Tidings, for his Heart standeth fast, and believeth in the Lord : or (as it is in the other Translation) His Heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

FEAR is a Perplexity of Mind, arising from the Apprehension of some Evil in View. And this Apprehension is raised in us, either by the *Reason*, inferring from the ordinary Course of human Affairs, a Probability of Miseries and Misfortunes coming upon us ; or else by the *Fancy*, which sometimes over-coming the Reason, represents to the Mind a Multitude of imaginary Dangers ; and these, by the Help of a disorderly Constitution, make as frightful Impressions, as if they were real and at hand.

From whichsoever of these Fountains it springs, it is certain, that amidst that Variety of Pressures, which break the Peace and Happiness of human Life, this of Fear is the most constant and most

tormenting. Our Sorrow for Losses that are *past*, as Friends, Children, or Estate, is mitigated by the Impossibility of retrieving them; or new Comforts spring up and refresh the Mind; or Time itself will wear away the Remembrance. And though *present* Afflictions are more quick and grievous, they are abated by the *Hopes* of Relief; or though there be no *immediate* Prospect of Relief (as it is in habitual Pains and Infirmities of the Body) yet the very Custom of Suffering does by Degrees lessen the Sense of it, and our Mind is by the same Degrees compos'd, and gains Strength; and having Time to weigh the Causes and Circumstances of our present Uneasiness, it is at Liberty to consider of such Remedies or Alleviations as our Condition will admit.

This is the Case of *past* and present Evils: But Fear being the Apprehension of an Evil to *come*, is all Uncertainty and Confusion. A Calamity, we believe, is coming upon us; but how, or when, or in what Measure, it will affect us, we cannot tell: And yet under this *Uncertainty* about the Circumstances of our Danger, Self-preservation calls upon us to consider solicitously how we shall avoid or prevent it. Which Consideration leads the Mind into an endless Chain of Thoughts and Contrivances; and the *Dwelling* upon it in that Manner, naturally increases the Terror, and makes it sink still the deeper. Especially, if it fall upon a Mind that is apt to receive the Impressions of Fear, then it aggravates and multiplies Dangers: Men, in that Case, making all the Evils that can possibly befall them; or have actually befallen others, the Subject of their own Fears.

II. Fear, therefore, whether with Ground or without, being thus prejudicial to the Happiness
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of Men's Lives, and greatly indisposing them both for the Service of God, and for the Duties of the respective Stations in which his Providence has placed them; it may be a useful and charitable Enquiry, What are the Means which the Christian Religion affords for moderating a Passion, that without due Restraints draws after it such unhappy Effects. An Enquiry, that being duly pursued, will much conduce to the Comfort of Men in this Life, by shewing them where, and upon what Terms they may be *sure* of Refuge in the Day of Danger; and to their Happiness in the next, by bringing them to a Christian Behaviour *under* these Trials; such as becomes the Religion they profess, and such as may approve and endear them to Almighty God.

To proceed distinctly in this Enquiry, it will be necessary to premise in general, What are the necessary *Qualifications* of a Preservative against Fear.

And the Ground of it being Self-preservation, (a Principle planted in us by Nature, and never to be rooted out) whatever is the Remedy of Fear, must give the Mind a reasonable Security, that, with such ordinary Care as common Prudence requires, our Persons, our Estates, and all Things that concern the real Happiness of our Lives, are under a sufficient Protection. Again, as the *Perplexity* of Fear consists chiefly in a Confusion and Floating of the Thoughts upon a Foresight of Danger; the Mind is not to be composed, till it find a Place where to rest in Safety and Quietness; till it be united to something, that, in the Language of Holy Scripture, may be an *Anchor of the Soul*, to keep it fixed and steady amidst the Waves and Storms of this troublesome World.

Farther ; As this Terror and Confusion of Thought arises from the Uncertainty of future Events, and our Inability to foresee or prevent them ; it can never be laid, but by a Belief and Persuasion, that however blind or helpless we are of *ourselves*, we have a Title to the Protection of some *others*, who, we are sure, can supply these Defects, by his Knowledge of Things to come, and by the Authority he has in disposing and ordering them. Nor is it sufficient for this Remedy against Fear, that it is in itself effectual, if obtained ; but to make it compleat, it must be always at hand ; because Fear with the Occasions of it, is oft-times sudden and surprising, more especially where it is a Disease of the Mind ; and in such Cases, a *distant* Remedy would be of small Use or Comfort. When these sudden Storms arise, if the Harbour we trust to be at a great Distance, we, notwithstanding that, may for a long Time be tossed to and fro, and perhaps overwhelmed at the last.

III. These are the necessary Qualifications, or (if I may so speak) the Ingredients of an effectual Remedy against Fear, as they are applied and opposed to the several Causes and Effects of that tormenting Passion. And these Qualifications are no where to be found, but in God alone, the great Director and Governor of all Things ; who foresees and disposes all future Events, and lays the Measures of Providence with a particular Eye to the Comfort and Benefit of his Servants, and has promised a constant and immediate Protection to the *good* Man : Who therefore has no Cause to be concerned about the Issues of Things with *Fear* or *Anxiety* ; but in vi tue of God's Promise to *him*, and an Assurance of his own Sincerity towards

wards God, may resolve, as the Psalmist in my Text directs him, *That he will not be afraid of any evil Tidings, for his Heart standeth fast, and believeth in the Lord*: He believes and trusts in the Promises of God; this Trust establishes his Heart; and a Heart, established upon that Principle, will not be afraid of any evil Tidings.

For the Proof and Explication hereof, I will show.

First, that God, and He alone, can be a certain Refuge under the Fears and Apprehensions of Danger.

Secondly, How the Divine Power in General becomes a Refuge against Fear to every Man in particular; and that is, by his *believing and trusting in God*.

Thirdly, By what Operation such a Belief or Trust in God prevents and repels the Fears of future Dangers; and that is, by confirming and establishing the Heart against the *Impressions* of them.

I. *First*, I am to shew, that God, and He alone, can be a certain Refuge under the Fears and Apprehensions of future Danger. For this is the first Step towards a Remedy against Fear; to be assured in general that there is some Being able to protect and deliver us from the Miseries we fear. Without this, our Case appears *desperate*; and this Assurance therefore removes all that Aggravation of our Terror and Concern. From thence, proceeding in Order, our next Degree of Ease and refreshment, is the finding who or what the Being is, so qualified in all Respects, either to deliver us from the Danger, or, which is the same Thing, to support us under it. And this Enquiry receives entire Satisfaction from what our Reason

and Religion teach us concerning the Divine Power. For as Fear arises from the Apprehension of Danger; so, be the Danger never so great, the Consideration of God's *Power* shews us the absolute Restraint he has not only upon any Mischief we may directly foresee, but upon all the Mischief that we can conceive as *possible* to befall us. Whether it be the Apprehension of Want and Poverty; God has the sole Disposal of the Blessings of this Life; it is he alone that maketh Poor and maketh Rich: Or, whether our Minds are disturbed at the *general* Vicissitude and Uncertainty of human Affairs: all these, however unsteady they appear to us, are directed to their proper Ends by the infinite Power and Wisdom of God. If our Fears be from *without* us, from the Malice and Authority of Men; we know that both the Hearts and the Hands of our Enemies are under the Government of God; If *within* us, from Pains, Infirmities, or other Notices of a decaying Constitution; in the Hands of the same God are the issues of Life and Death. Or, lastly, if the Fears which perplex and fasten upon the Thoughts, are the meer Effects of Constitution, and raised by a melancholy Turn of Mind; it must be remembered, as oft as they arise, that the *Mind*, with every Thought and Imagination of it, is under the Restraint and Government of an all-powerful and gracious God: Who, where he finds the Heart sincerely desirous to serve and please him, will not suffer such Infirmities of Constitution, which are Men's Unhappiness and not their Fault, to proceed farther, or continue longer, than he, for wise and gracious Ends, shall see fit. And, without doubt, one main End of these and the like Dispensations, is, first, to lead Men to see the

the Wisdom and Necessity of trusting in God ; and then, to engage them in a regular and religious Course of Life, as the only Way to *warrant* such a Trust, and to entitle them to the Comfort and Benefit of it.

Thus, whatever our Dangers are, and from whencesoever our Fears arise, we are assured, from the Accounts which both Natural and Revealed Religion give us of the Divine Power and Providence, that God is absolutely *able* to protect and deliver us. And it is the great Foundation of Men's Misery in this World, that under all their Terrors and Anxieties, they *forget* God, who alone *can* give them Peace and Assurance, and fly for Refuge only to the Succours of this World, which may increase, but of themselves can never remove their Perplexities. They are under the Apprehensions of Danger ; and can they rest in the Hopes of Protection from their Fellow-Creatures, who are unable to protect themselves ? They dread the Issue of future Events ; and, to relieve that Fear, will they seek only to Man, who neither foresees those Events, nor has it in his Power to order and direct them ? They want to have a terrified Mind settled and composed ; and, for that End, will they place their whole Dependance upon human Aids, and Remedies ; none of which can avail to their Relief, unless they be accompanied with the *Blessing of God*.

'Tis true, this Hope of Comfort and Relief from Worldly Succours, as long as it holds, may suspend our Fears, and abate the Strength of them for the present. But when Experience and Observation have discovered the Uncertainty and Insufficiency of them, and that they afford no Stay

or Support upon which the Mind can finally rest; the same Fears must of Course return. And thus Men who will seek for Relief no where but in this World, make their whole Lives a wild and uncomfortable Succession of Hopes and Fears, Expectations and Disappointments.

The Sum therefore is this: The Mind (as it is entrusted with the Care of the Body, and of all Things that concern the Safety of the Man) cannot but Fear, upon the Approach or Foresight of Danger: That Fear cannot be removed, without a reasonable Assurance of Safety and Protection against such Danger: This Assurance no worldly Succours are capable of giving, nor any Being whatsoever, but God alone. From whence it follows, That it is the Wisdom and the great Happiness of Men, not to distract their Thoughts and delude themselves with the Hopes of Security or Comfort in the Powers or Interests of this World; but under all their Fears and Terrors of what kind soever, to have their Minds more especially upon God; the Consideration of whose Power and Providence, in the Government of the World; and the Direction of future Events, is the first Step towards an effectual Preservative against Fear; because the Mind receives from thence a full Assurance of its having found (what this World does not afford) a Being that in all Respects is *able* to protect and support us.

Which leads me to the second Enquiry.

II. How the Divine Power and Providence in general, becomes an effectual Refuge from Fear to every Man in particular; and that is, by believing or trusting in God; *He will not be afraid of any evil Tidings*; Why? because *his Heart believeth*

lièvetb in the Lord ; or, because he lives in a full Persuasion and Assurance, that God *can* protect him, and, that he certainly *will* do it. For these two are absolutely necessary to make up that Belief and Trust in God, which the Text proposes as the only certain Remedy against Fear. If I were only certain that God is *able* to protect me, without any Assurance that he will do it ; or if I knew that God was *willing* to protect me, but were not sure that he *can* do it ; neither of these could remove my Fears, or compose my Mind, in the Day of Danger and Adversity. But when I stedfastly believe, that the God on whom I am invited to depend, is infinite in Power, and therefore *can* protect and support me in all Conditions ; infinite in Truth, and so *will* undoubtedly make good all the Promises of Favour and Protection, which I find in his Revealed Word ; these two Persuasions naturally inspire us frail and helpless Creatures with an earnest *Desire* to put ourselves under the Divine Protection ; and when we see any Danger approaching, they teach us to fly immediately to God for Succour, and to place our great Hope and Confidence in his Goodness ; there, more especially, to lay the Foundation of our Comfort and Safety, and in a steadfast and chearful Reliance upon his Promises, to reckon ourselves secure under the Shadow of his Wings.

These, I say, are the natural Effects of our believing the *Power*, the *Promises*, and the *Truth* of Almighty God ; but yet so, if a Belief and Sense of these Things be first wrought in every Man's Heart, and improved into Principles. For however God's Government of the World, and the Promises he has made to Mankind, be in themselves sure ; yet the Hand, by which he works,

being invisible, oft-times escapes our Notice ; at least does not sufficiently strike and affect us, till we, by *dwelling* and *meditating* upon his Power and Promises, have trained up the Heart to an habitual Reliance upon them, and so have provided for ourselves a constant Preservative against Fear, whenever Danger or Calamity over-takes us.

That therefore, amidst the Uncertainties of this troublesome Life, a Belief of God's *All-sufficiency* may effectually operate for the Prevention or Removal of our Fears ; let each of us treasure up in his Mind worthy Conceptions and a just Sense of the Divine Power and Providence in the Government of the World ; by meditating frequently upon the stupendous Work of the Creation ; raised by his Word out of Nothing, into all this Beauty and Order, and remaining entirely under the Direction and Government of his All-seeing Providence ; So that no-Creature can live or subsist but in and by him ; nothing can move but by his Permission, much less exceed the Bounds that he shall appoint. No future Events can escape his Knowledge, nor any Designs be laid so deep, or carried on so secretly, the *Springs* and *Progress* of which are not naked and open to his Eye. Nor can any Workings of the Fancy or Imagination be so sudden or strong, as to put it out of his Power to divert, restrain, and over-rule them.

Thus, in short, has our Religion taught us to conceive of the *Power* and *Providence* of Almighty God ; and our frequent *Meditations* upon these, make his absolute Authority in the Government of the World, familiar to our Thoughts, and root in us a firm Persuasion, and, if I may so say, an *habitual* Conviction and Assurance, that there is no Danger or Mischief we can fear or foresee,
from

from which God is not able to protect and deliver us.

2. But however our meditating on these Things may raise our Admiration of the Divine Power and Wisdom, and excite in us an earnest *Desire* to live under the constant Care of so mighty a Protector; yet it is from the many *Promises* of Favour and Protection made by Almighty God to his Servants, that our Comfort and our Assurance of Safety, must chiefly and immediately spring. And since, as I said before, it is this *Assurance* of Protection in the Day of Danger, which alone can abate or remove our Fears; Nothing but a frequent Meditation upon the *Promises* on which that Assurance is grounded, can establish in any Man a constant Preservative against Fear. My *reading* or *hearing* God's Word may satisfy me in general, that he has made such Promises to his Servants; but it is by *dwelling* upon them, and *inculcating* them upon my Mind, that must make them Promises and Principles to me; so as to give them their due Effect and Operation in preparing and arming me against Fears and Dangers. For such a Meditation leads me to apply the Divine Promises to myself in particular, and to consider my Soul, my Body, and whatever belongs to me, under the immediate Protection of God, and so it works my Mind by Degrees into an habitual *Trust* and *Reliance* upon him.

That therefore we may lay up in our Breasts, and constantly carry about us a certain Preservative against Fear, there is no Way either so effectual or so becoming a Christian, as a frequent Meditation upon the many Assurances of Protection, which God has made over to us in his Revealed Word. Such is, in the first Place, our blessed Sa-
viour's

viour's Discourse, (*Matth. vi.*) against all Fears and Anxieties about the Comforts and Conveniencies of human life; entirely grounded upon the peculiar Care of God over *Mankind*, and concluding with a general Assurance, that none of his Servants shall ever want any Thing, that he shall see needful or convenient for them. Verse 33. *Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and all these Things shall be added unto you.* Such also, are the Exhortations of his Apostles, to lay aside all anxious Cares about future Events, and to rely chearfully upon God for every Thing that concerns the Safety or Happiness of this Life; all of them immediately grounded upon the express Promises of his Fatherly Care and protection: *Cast all your Care upon God,* (says St. Peter, *1 Pet. v. 7.*) *for he careth for you:* And St. Paul (*Heb. xiii. 5, 6.*) *Be content with such Things as ye have, for God hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee:* And again, (*Rom. viii. 28.*) *We know that all Things work together for Good to them who love God.* Where the Apostle represents Almighty God, not only as having an especial Care over us, and a tender Concern for us, but as laying and contriving all the Measures of Providence for the Comfort and Benefit of his Servants. And as the same Apostle elsewhere argues, *If God be for us, who is he that can be against us?* Or, (as the Psalmist reasons) *If the Lord be on our Side, why will we fear what Man can do unto us?*

3. This is the Principle upon which the Gospel forbids all Fears or Anxieties about future Events, and endeavours to establish us in a steadfast Dependance upon God's Care and Protection. The Meditating upon which, ought certainly to carry Christians to as high Degrees of Trust and
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Confidence in God, as we find many holy Men of old had raised themselves upon less clear Revelations of the Divine Will; speaking of God, in the Time of Danger and Calamity, as their *Strength* and *Fortress*, their *Rock*, their *Buckler*, and their *Shield*; Allusions by which they represented their entire confidence in God, and their full Persuasion of Safety and Happiness under his Protection. In which Respect, many of their Sayings and Examples may be very well recommended to the Practice and Imitation of *Christians*. Those, more especially in the Book of *Psalms*, being made the Subject of our Meditation, will be found an excellent Means to strengthen and confirm our Dependence upon God. *Happy is he* (says the Psalmist, *Psal. cxlvi. 5.*) *who hath the God of Jacob for his Help, and whose Hope is in the Lord his God.* And *Psal. xl. 4.* *Blessed is the Man who maketh the Lord his Trust:* And again, *Psal. lvi. 4.* with immediate Reference to himself, *In God have I put my Trust; I will not fear what Flesh can do unto me.* And when he found his Soul fainting under the Weight of his Fears and Afflictions, he expostulates with it, and sends it to God for Comfort and Relief: *Why art thou so full of Heaviness, O my Soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? Put thy Trust in God.*

Now, as the Apostle speaks, *Rom. xv. 4.* these Lessons and Examples were all recorded for our Learning, that we, through Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures, might have Hope; that, by meditating upon the Divine Promises of Protection, and having before our Eyes the Degrees of Trust and Confidence in God, to which these holy Men arrived, we may both know where to find a certain Remedy for our Fears in the Day of Danger,
and

and *against* that Day, be training up ourselves to an entire Reliance upon the Power, Providence, and Truth of Almighty God.

I. But that our Trust and Hope prove not *Presumption*, we must take great Care.

I. Not to extend the Promises of God beyond the Terms upon which they are made, nor apply them to ourselves, unless we perform our Part of the Condition; that is, unless we make it our daily Endeavour to serve and please that God from whom we expect our Protection; there being no Ground, either in Reason or Religion, to reckon upon the Care and Favour of God, while we live in an habitual Neglect or Violation of his Laws. To such men the Promises of God afford no Comfort, nor his Word any Ground of Ease or Assurance upon the Approach of Danger. On the contrary, the very Considerations by which God ministers Comfort to good Men, are to the Wicked the greatest Terror and Confusion. Do they fly for Refuge to the Providence of God? This teaches them that he sees and knows all the Wickedness of their Hearts and Actions: Do they reflect upon his *Almighty Power*? This puts them in Mind that he *can* punish them when-ever he pleases: Do they seek Comfort in the Divine *Truth*? This assures them that he *will*, sooner or later, execute upon them the Punishments he has denounced against all obstinate Sinners. If therefore a wicked Man do not fear, it is because he considers not the Condition he is in; for if he did, it is a much greater Wonder that his Life should be any Thing else but one *continued Course* of Terror and Confusion; not only as he lives *out* of the Divine Protection, but also as he is daily *pun-*
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ling down upon his Head the Wrath and Judgment of Almighty God.

Wicked Men therefore have no Foundation of Comfort; but on the contrary, Matter of the greatest Dread and Terror, from the Consideration of God's Power and Promises; nor does our Religion afford them any Way to procure a certain Remedy for their Fears, but the Changing their Lives, and so restoring themselves to the Protection of God.

2. But here it will be needful, on the other Hand, to give a Caution to good Men, such especially as are naturally subject to Doubts and Fears, that they *weaken* not their Trust in God, by groundless Suspicions of their being *out* of his Protection, on Account of the Failures and imperfections they discover, and at the same Time lament, in the Discharge of their Duty. They should remember; that these, more or less, are the Case of the best Men; and that the Thing which God regards and accepts, is, an *habitual* Fear of offending him, and a sincere Desire and Endeavour to please him. And none can be ignorant whether or no he stands thus affected towards God, who will attend to the Frame and Disposition of his Heart, and the General Tenor of his Life and Actions. And though a Mind that is apt to perplex itself with needless Doubts and Scruples, is a troublesome Inmate in *other* Respects; in this it may be Matter of Comfort, That such a Tenderneſs of Mind, and an habitual Fear lest we do any Thing that may displease God, helps greatly to keep us within the Bounds of our Duty, and by Consequence, within the Divine Care and Protection.

3. And

3. And there is this farther Caution to be given to good Men in general, as to the Ground of their Trust in God; that though they are truly serious in Religion, and make it their daily Endeavour to improve in it, and live for that End in an habitual Fear of God, a Reverence of his Laws, and a conscientious Use of the Ordinances of the Gospel; though, I say, such Men have a *sure* and *undoubted* Title to the Divine Protection in every Condition; yet the *Promises* thereof must not be so interrupted, as if they gave an absolute Exemption from Dangers and Calamities. For, of these we see the best Men have sometimes the largest Share; the Divine Wisdom making use of them, to wean Men more and more from a Dependance upon the Things of this World, and to lead them to place their Confidence in God, and their great Happiness in the Expectation of a better Life. So that God's Promises do not *remove* worldly Calamities; but what is a sufficient Remedy of Fear, they take away the *Sting* and *Terror* of them, by an Assurance they breed in us, that as God is abundantly *able* to prevent whatever Danger or Calamity we fear; so he certainly *will* either prevent it, or make it the Means of bringing some very valuable Blessings in this World or the next. Under this View, I say, taking the next Life into our Accounts of the Happiness and Misery of this, there is no Cause why the Foresight of Danger and Adversity should be so terrible to a good Man; who has surrendered himself to the Disposal of God, and rest in a full Assurance, grounded upon a Divine Promise, that however uncomfortable Things may appear for the present, in the End they shall all work together for his Good. And so, as oft as Danger overtakes him, he makes

2 fresh Resignation of himself to the Divine Providence; and every such Surrender of ourselves into the Hands of God, is the highest Act of Adoration we can pay to the Deity. It is a solemn, and, if I may so say, a *practical* Acknowledgment of the Divine Power and Truth.. Add to this, that every such Act of Reliance lays a farther *Engagement* upon God to be our Protector and Deliverer; according to that of the Prophet, *the Lord knoweth them who trust in him*; and of the Psalmist, *The Lord taketh Pleasure in them, who hope in his Mercy*; who, under the Fear and Apprehension of the utmost Extremities, can fly to God with the Faith and Resolution of the Patriarch *Job, Though he slay me yet will I trust in him.*

4. There is but one more Caution necessary to prevent our Misapplication of a Religious Dependence upon God in the Day of Danger; and that is, that it does not supersede, but rather suppose and enjoin a prudent Use of such human Means and Assistances, as may contribute to the Safety of our Bodies and Estates, or to the Peace and Comfort of our Minds. The Use of these Means, I say, (supposing *them* to be lawful in themselves, and us not to rely upon them *wholly*, or *more* than on God, or any otherwise than in Subordination to God) is so far from interfering with a Religious Trust in the Divine Power and Providence, that, being duly applied, they always carry in them an *Acknowledgment* of both; that is, whatever Remedy or Security either Art or Nature provides for the Quiet and Comfort of human Life, the Religious Man ascribes all to the Divine Goodness and Bounty. With the Use of them he joins his earnest Prayers for the Blessing of
God.

God to make them successful, and then uses and applies them with an entire Submission to the Divine Wisdom, and a Resolution, that whatever be the Issue of his own Endeavours, and whatever becomes of the Supports of this World, his chief and ultimate Trust shall be always in God; and though all *human* Means should fail, that, however, he can still support himself by an Assurance of the Divine Protection: As we find the Prophet expressing an *entire* and *absolute* Security of Comfort in God, *Although* (says he) *the Fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall Fruit be in the Vines; the Labour of the Olive shall fail, and the Fields shall yield no Meat: The Flock shall be cut off from the Fold, and there shall be no Herd in the Stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation, Habak. iii. 17, 18.*

I come now to my third General, and under it shall shew very briefly,

III. By what Operation such a Belief or Trust in God prevents or repels the Fears of future Dangers, and that is, by *confirming* and *establishing* the Heart against the Impression of them: *He will not be afraid of any evil Tidings, because his Heart standeth fast.* Where the Mind is not prepared for Dangers, the Foresight or Approach of them unavoidably shakes and dejects it; and the Apprehension of a Calamity at Hand, joined to an utter Uncertainty where to seek for Relief, must needs be attended with great Uneasiness and Confusion. But where the Heart has duly considered the *Power* and *Promises* of God, and sufficiently meditated upon them, and by applying them to itself has made that Trust and Confidence in God, which immediately flows from them, it's settled Principle; this keeps it firm and steady under the first

first Appearances of Danger, and puts a Stop to all anxious Considerations and desponding Thoughts, by showing it immediately what Course it shall take; that is, by directing it to fly to God, in a full Assurance of Comfort and Protection. Our own Endeavours, the Assistance of Friends, and the Application of other human Means, may, under God's Providence, prove the Instruments of our Deliverance in the *Event*: But upon the Approach and Apprehension of Danger, the Success of all these is uncertain, and cannot therefore comfort or establish the Heart by any *Assurance* of Safety: That can be had no where but in God, whose Power and Promises we are sure can never fail, and under whose Protection therefore our Minds may be easy and our Thoughts at Rest. And so Solomon (*Prov. xvi. 3.*) makes this *Steadiness* of Thoughts and Resolutions, an immediate Effect of having surrendered ourselves to the Divine Protection; *Commit thy Works unto the Lord, and thy Thoughts shall be established*: And in another Place, (*Prov. xviii. 10.*) he speaks of the Righteous as living under God's Protection, with such a Security and Persuasion of Safety, as they who live under the Cover of some impregnable Hold, *The Name of the Lord is a strong Tower; the Righteous runneth to it, and are safe.*

That therefore our Hearts may be established upon this comfortable Assurance of having God for our constant Refuge; let it be the daily Endeavour of us all, to recommend ourselves to the Divine Favour and Protection, by such a *Life* as may make the Consideration of God's Presence with us in all our Ways, a Matter of *Comfort* and not of *Terror*. And being conscious of our Sincerity towards God, let us, (as becomes those who have

have received these gracious Assurances from him, lay hold upon his Promises, as the surest Remedy against all Fears and Anxieties in the Day of Danger; and whenever that Day comes, (as the Vicissitude of human Affairs brings it very often) let it appear by a Composedness and Serenity of Mind, by an Evenness of Temper and Behaviour under all Conditions, that our Trust is not in the uncertain Succours of this World, but in the Living God, *who is the same Yesterday, To day, and for ever*; who oft-times threatens us with Dangers, and suffers Fears to fall upon us, for no other End but to prove and confirm our Trust and Confidence in him. And every Instance of our betaking ourselves to the Divine Protection for Comfort and Safety, is a farther Testimony of the Stedfastness of our Faith, and a fresh Endearment of us to God; as our Calmness and Easiness in the Day of Danger, which immediately arises from a *Sense* of that Protection, illustrates his Glory, and proclaims to Mankind, in a very lively Manner, the *Power* and *Efficacy* of a Religious Trust in God.

To conclude: He who stedfastly believes the Power, Promises, and Truth of Almighty God, has no Cause to *dread* any Thing in this World, but the Divine Displeasure; and *that* is in every one's Power to prevent, by living in the Fear of God, and a conscientious Regard to the Divine Laws.



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